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KT photo | **Tim Bath**
Rob Burgess, Tribune night editor

House of Burgess: Limestone Comedy Festival guide

‘Indiana’s first and only comedy festival’ looks awesome

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

[Editor’s Note: I wanted to give you, my readers, a quick rundown of the four announced headliners of the upcoming Limestone Comedy Festival before tickets went on sale Friday. (Badges will go for $75 per person and $125 for VIP access.) Check next Wednesday’s Lifestyle section for my exclusive interview with Mat Alano-Martin, director of the festival, along with information on the more than 40 other comedians scheduled. In the meantime, head to limestonefest.com.]

I can tell you this with a straight face and as an objective journalist: if you were to list the hands-down funniest comedians working today, the four announced headliners of the inaugural Limestone Comedy Festival would absolutely be in the conversation. When I first heard about “Indiana’s first and only comedy festival,” which is slated for June 6 through 8 in Bloomington, I almost fell out of my chair. I’m a comedy nerd to the bitter end, and I’m here to tell you this is a dream line-up. Allow me to break it down for you:

Maria Bamford

It doesn’t feel right to me to call Maria Bamford a stand-up comedian. The title doesn’t really do justice to what she does. She is working on a level of storytelling and theater most in her line of work will never even come close to. For example, in December she released an hour-long stand-up online. Nothing out of the ordinary about that, right? I’ll let Jason Zinoman of the New York Times explain the rest: “In ‘The Special Special Special!’ … Ms. Bamford performs an hour of stand-up for her mother and father as they sit on a couch. By replacing a typical audience with her original one, she breathes life into a cliché by making it literal and creates a compelling dynamic that is as eccentric as her singularly funny comedy.” In 2011, she broke attendance records at The Comedy Attic in Bloomington. It’s not hard

to figure out why.

Doug Benson

I can’t count how many hours I spent with the voices of Doug Benson and his cohorts in my head, spicing up the most mundane household chores. His podcast “Doug Loves Movies” is among my favorites, and I consider each and every episode essential listening. I’ve even played some of his many movie-related games with friends, including The Leonard Maltin Game, a semi-complicated game best described as Name That Tune, but for movies. Benson also co-hosts another podcast, “Dining with Doug and Karen,” an episode of which will be recorded at the festival. A note for sensitive ears: When I interviewed Mat Alano-Martin, director of the festival, I asked him about the advertised family-friendly portion. He confirmed my suspicions that Benson’s stand-up performance would not be in that category.

Pete Holmes

Speaking of “Doug Loves Movies”, one of my favorite guests is Pete Holmes. One of the all-time classic lineups on the show involves Holmes, T.J. Miller and Jeff Garlin in a running competition Benson has dubbed “Most Annoying Guest.” What he really means to say is that these three need no prompting and would command the stage and riff continuously for hours with

absolutely no prompting whatsoever if he let them. Holmes also has his own excellent podcast on the Nerdist podcast network, “You Made It Weird.” It’s also one of the most downloaded podcasts on iTunes. And on Feb. 26 it was announced that TBS would begin airing “The Midnight Show with Pete Holmes” in the fall. I’ve never seen Holmes’ stand-up live, but from everything I’ve heard from him, I expect nothing less than full-service entertainment.

Tig Notaro

Regular readers of this column should already know why I think Tig Notaro is one of the funniest, strongest people in the world. To summarize my October column “Laughing in death’s face,” Notaro had what you might call a tough couple of months when, in quick succession, she was hospitalized for pneumonia and a bacterium eating her digestive tract, lost her mother in a tragic accident, suffered a romantic breakup and was diagnosed with Stage II breast cancer. Since then, she’s had a double mastectomy and signed a book deal with Ecco, an imprint of HarperCollins. On top of that, “Live,” the set in which she chronicled her Job-like level of discord, became the highest selling comedy album of last year. Now, she’s slated to kick off the festival’s first night on June 6.

I couldn’t be more excited. Can you tell?

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